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THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH  
Moray House School  
of Education

Teachers' perceptions of pupil active citizenship and the  
transition from primary to secondary school

The Gordon Cook Foundation  
Commissioned Research

## PROJECT REPORT

Hamish Ross & Jane Brown  
The University of Edinburgh  
12 September 2013

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## Executive Summary

This report is of research funded by the Gordon Cook Foundation and carried out by the Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh. The research examined school teachers' perceptions of the development of their pupils' active citizenship in Scottish primary and secondary schools, and in particular over the transition from primary to secondary school. "Active citizenship" or the development of civic competence included ideas of pupil participation, responsibility, leadership, decision-making and voice.

The study reports interviews with 53 teachers in 17 schools that made up four "clusters" of schools, where a cluster consisted of a secondary school and the main primary schools from which pupils would transition to the secondary. Each of the four clusters was in a different Scottish Local Authority.

The study also considered Scottish and international literature pertaining to pupil citizenship and to primary-secondary transition. It found a major gap in the research literature, where there appeared to be a lack of studies that focused on primary-secondary transitions and citizenship. Instead, research has concentrated on the significant impact that transition has on pupil attainment and social and emotional wellbeing.

The study is therefore one of the first of its kind, internationally, and Scotland provides an interesting case because of its relatively homogenous schooling structure, consisting of clusters of primary and secondary schools with a single, major pupil transition between them.

The study reports the many means by which both primary and secondary schools develop pupil responsibility, voice, participation and leadership (civic competence) and the professed purposes of this activity. The interviewees discussed mechanisms including those that involved: committee membership/citizenship (such as pupil councils); leadership (such as peer tutoring and playground monitoring); participatory learning (such as co-operative learning and personal target setting in the classroom); and consultative participation (such as consulting pupils on the school development plan). It was clear that this has been a major growth area in schools and that it has in part been driven by significant education policy developments. The study identified both more structural approaches, where pupils opted-in to established arrangements (such as pupil councils), and more flexible approaches where the school responded to pupil initiatives.

The study also reports the various means by which clusters of schools manage the transition of pupils from primary to secondary school. These were wide-ranging and tended to focus (though not exclusively) on pupils' social and emotional wellbeing, literacy and numeracy.

Teachers perceived upper primary (P7) and lower secondary (S1) pupils in a range of ways. Primary and secondary teachers recognised that both kinds of pupils were confident, vocal and skilled co-operators in their classroom learning. Primary teachers also saw P7 pupils as caring, moral and socially aware, "ready"

and en-skilled for the next stage of life, learning and work, and a few thought that S1 pupils were deskilled in relation to the civic competence they had displayed in P7. Secondary teachers also emphasised S1 pupils' enthusiasm in the classroom, and their confidence and co-operation skills, but noted some lack of motivation for citizenship activity outside the classroom, even in the face of appropriate opportunities.

There was a general acknowledgement that pupils seemed less involved with responsibility, leadership, participation and voice, upon transition, even as they embraced other aspects of their new school lives with enthusiasm, confidence and well-developed skills. This was ironic because there was some evidence that the development of civic competence in upper primary was in part a means to the end of being ready for secondary school.

It was also clear that the management of pupils' active citizenship or civic competence across transition was a relatively low priority in the face of resource restrictions upon transition arrangements.

However, even where steps were being taken to focus on the issue of civic competence in transition, these were not always successful. Explanations for this varied. They included the view that secondary schools underestimated the potential of their new pupils. Staff visits between primary and secondary were an important way of recognising this issue. But it was also clear that primary and secondary schools were very different kinds of institutions. The transiting pupil moved from a single-teacher-dominated relationship to a much more fragmented context. This change probably affects the flow of information that accompanies the pupil, and how long it takes for a secondary school to "get to know" a new pupil, which were thought to be important pre-cursors of understanding and developing pupils' civic competence. There was also a perception that pupils were less interested in opportunities to develop their citizenship outside their classroom learning. In particular, there was a sense that pupils were averse to activities that appeared similar to their primary school experiences (and of course responsibility, leadership, participation and citizenship were major parts of their primary experience), despite their enthusiasm for the novelty of other aspects of secondary school life.

Primary-secondary transition and citizenship is therefore a complex area. The study recommends that: (a) cross-sector staff visits be further developed and that national policy priorities might be used to justify this; however, (b) in the case of civic competence, clusters should be cautious about focusing too much on continuity and progression from primary school experience; (c) that there are ways of re-thinking the pupil and civic competence that might help develop new approaches for lower secondary schooling – in particular, viewing arriving pupils' civic competence as a given, and therefore as a resource, rather than as an educational goal; finally, (d) that pupil research should be an important pre-requisite of new developments, and that pupils themselves might participate in research design and execution.

## Authors, acknowledgements & citation

The authors would like to thank the teachers, school managers and Local Authority personnel who contributed to this study. Those who were interviewed, in particular, gave their time in the middle of busy school days and we appreciate both their sacrifices and those of others, unseen, who were covering their duties.

The authors would also like to thank the Gordon Cook Foundation for funding this research, and Ivor Sutherland for his enthusiastic and supportive approach to managing the project from the Foundation's end.

The Gordon Cook Foundation is an Aberdeen-based charity established in 1974 to promote and develop values education in the British education systems. Values education includes social and moral education, health education and projects likely to promote character development and citizenship. The Foundation is dedicated to the advancement and promotion of all aspects of education and training which are likely to promote "character development" and "citizenship". In recent years, the Foundation has adopted the term Values Education to denote the wide range of activity it seeks to support.

<http://www.gordoncook.org/>

Dr Jane Brown is Senior Research Fellow in the Institute of Education Community & Society, at the Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh: [j.a.brown@ed.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.brown@ed.ac.uk)

Dr Hamish Ross is Senior Lecturer and Deputy Head of the Institute of Education, Teaching & Leadership, at the Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh: [www.ed.ac.uk/education/hamish-ross](http://www.ed.ac.uk/education/hamish-ross) | [hamish.ross@ed.ac.uk](mailto:hamish.ross@ed.ac.uk)

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## Introduction

The children leave here and they are used to being representatives, used to having responsibilities for lots of things. And they go into secondary and, of course they are the youngest and maybe don't get the same opportunities or secondary teachers might forget that they have this experience behind them.

[Primary headteacher]

This report gives the findings of a study funded by the Gordon Cook Foundation. The purpose of the study was to examine the transition between Scottish primary and secondary schools with a view to understanding how pupil citizenship education was managed over this transition. The study was prompted by a widespread recognition that pupil voice, responsibility, participation and leadership were growing areas of school activity and that while pupils were treated as active and competent citizens in upper primary school they were treated as much less so in the early years of secondary school. Moreover, internationally, there was very little research into this state of affairs.

The study focused exclusively on the views of teachers<sup>1</sup> and aimed to find out:

- What activities in the school were considered to be 'active citizenship'?
- Who was and was not involved in those activities?
- How teachers talked about children 'as citizens'?
- How teachers understood the primary-secondary transition in relation to citizenship practices, such as pupil voice, participation and responsibility?

The study was conducted in 4 clusters of schools, each in a different Local Authority area in Scotland. Each cluster contained one secondary school and the three or four primary schools from which the secondary school received the majority of its new pupils.

Semi-structured interviews were held with staff in 17 schools and a total of 53 teachers took part in this research. An important outcome of the study involved developing cluster-specific feedback to clusters in order to help inform their on-going work in these areas.

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<sup>1</sup> The report refers to 'teachers' and 'interviewees' interchangeably, and some of the interviewees were also school managers such as headteachers and deputy headteachers.

## Literature review

There is very little literature internationally that examines the curriculum imperatives of pupil responsibility, participation, voice, leadership and citizenship through the transition from primary to secondary education. However the literature on related aspects of this transition, detailed below, offers some insights.

### Working definitions of citizenship and transition

For the purposes of the present study, education for “active citizenship” in schooling was understood as promoting civic competence. The study’s intended context was on Scheeren’s (2011) “pragmatic dimension” of education for citizenship, which related to pupils’ gaining of experience and taking action. The final interview schedules did not make explicit reference to “citizenship” but referred to pupil participation, voice, decision-making, responsibility and leadership.<sup>2</sup>

For the present study the particularity of the structure of Scottish schooling is important, since this system might exaggerate the effects of transition. The “transition from primary to secondary schooling” is a widely understood concept in Scottish education. Pupils move from one institution (primary school), catering for children up to the age of 12, to another institution catering for children from ages 12 to 16, 17 or 18 (depending on when the student leaves compulsory education after the age of 16) (secondary school). In the state system, pupils at a particular primary school are likely to transfer to the same secondary school. The primary school is said to be part of the same school “cluster”<sup>3</sup> as the secondary school. Indeed, out-of-cluster moves might not be as well catered for in transition arrangements (Graham and Hill, 2003). In addition, secondary schools are comprehensive, catering for the majority of pupils regardless of anticipated post-school destinations. In these various respects, arrangements in the rest of the UK and internationally are more diverse.

### Citizenship education research in Scotland

World-wide, there is a range of literature on pupil voice, participation, responsibility, leadership and citizenship (Scheerens, 2011, Torney-Purta et al., 2001, Biesta and Lawy, 2006, Osler and Starkey, 2006, Kerr et al., 2007). Interest in pupil citizenship is driven by a range of purposes (Ross et al., 2007) and there has been growing interest in the relationship between civic competence, pedagogy and school cultures (Geller et al., 2013). It is anticipated that the present study will contribute to debates on these issues.

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<sup>2</sup> Early pilot interviews revealed that interviewees interpreted the term “citizenship” as an education policy construct. This resulted in interviewees responding with policy-related discourses and discourses about “global citizenship”, both of which lay at the periphery of the study focus.

<sup>3</sup> Some Local Authorities use alternative terms for “cluster”



While it is beyond the scope of this study to review the above work, there have been recent Scottish studies bearing on the development of civic competence in schooling.

A *Learning and Teaching Scotland*-funded investigation of “pupil participation” included a major survey of schools (n=622), documentary analysis of materials submitted by 19 schools or policy-makers across 12 local authorities, and two primary and two secondary school case studies involving teacher and pupil interview, pupil school tours, and lesson observations (Cross et al., 2009). Participation practices were discovered to be wide-ranging in 2007/8. Previously, these same practices were suspected of being “avant garde” through an “embryonic” period of pupil participation in Scotland from 1994 to 2002 (Ross et al., 2007, p. 242/3). This change indicates a major policy investment in citizenship education in Scotland from 2002 onwards, which advocated whole-school approaches to citizenship (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2002). Cross et al. (2009) found that, especially in primary schools, policy was a major driver of high levels of work on pupil participation. The *Curriculum for Excellence* (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009), in particular, included the aim of developing “responsible citizens”.

One of Cross et al.’s (2009) categories of participation was “civic participation” (which included pupil councils, community and decision-making activity). The *Scottish Consumer Council* conducted an *IPSOS Mori* poll of 1,969 Scottish secondary students about pupil councils (Scottish Consumer Council, 2007) and the report included some comparison with a 2005 survey commissioned by the *Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People*. The findings identified an increase (since 2005) in the number of pupils knowing that their secondary school had a pupil council (to 84%). The survey also reported that a third of pupils claimed to have been a member of a pupil council at some point during their school careers.

Hulme et al. (2011) cautioned that apparently increasing levels of “participation” could obscure on-going inequities in power within schools. They noted that participation in Cross et al.’s study tended to be “invitational”, in the sense that pupils were invited to engage with teacher-arranged and teacher-evaluated participatory opportunities (p. 139). Moreover, this was indicative of a wider concern about the “incorporation” of participation and citizenship into an under-critical performance of school managerialism, in which:

the ‘good teacher’ and learner are constructed as self-regulating and self-evaluating (Fenwick, 2003). Models of engagement premised on notions of civic responsibility can lead to an experience of citizenship as heavy on duty and light on opportunity. (Hulme et al., 2011, p.141)

The growth of pupil voice, responsibility, participation, leadership and citizenship in Scotland’s schools is undeniable. However the meanings given to these concepts vary and are dependent on other aspects of schooling policy and culture. Teachers’ perceptions of pupils as citizens might therefore vary

between school contexts and catchment areas as well as within cluster arrangements.

### **The broader significance of transition**

The present study has found a significant gap in the primary-secondary transition research literature. Many studies are predicated on the same assumptions as the present one, with more than one quoting Summerfield's observation about transition that:

From being the oldest, most responsible, best known and most demonstrably able – both academically and physically – these children became the youngest, least knowing and least known members of the community in which they find themselves. (Summerfield, 1986)

However there appear to be no studies that have investigated what happens to civic competence, responsibility, leadership and voice across the primary-secondary transition.

The apparent explanatory force of transition on pupil attainment (e.g. Hattie, 2008) has instigated international interest in transition. This has focused largely on transition effects on achievement, social adjustment, and the relationship between these and various forms of at-risk status, gender or ethnicity (McGee et al., 2004). West et al. (2010) surveyed 2000 Scottish pupils aged 11 in 1994 (in 135 primary schools), and followed-up these pupils at age 13-15 (in 43 secondary schools), and again at age 18-19 (after their schooling, in 2002/3). They attempted to identify primary-secondary transition effects (of the new pupils' school and of their new peer associations) upon attainment and well-being. They summarised that:

At age 15, a poorer school transition predicted higher levels of depression and lower attainment; a poorer peer transition [predicted] lower self-esteem, more depression and lower levels of anti-social behaviour. Although reduced in size [of effect], similar results extended to outcomes at age 18/19. These effects bear comparison with those associated with gender and school disengagement, clearly demonstrating the importance of successful transition for later well-being and attainment. (West et al., 2010, p. 21)

### **The significance of teacher perceptions**

Teachers' perceptions of pupils before and after transition are likely to be of importance. Few studies examine teachers' perceptions and constructions on transition (Munthe and Thuen, 2009). In Scotland the quantity and range of school-to-school data that accompanies the transitioning pupil is growing, though the quantity and range that reaches all secondary classroom teachers is probably more limited. Even the data that does reach individual teachers is probably interpreted alongside a range of other impressionistic judgements (Noyes, 2003). Moreover, Cross (2011) observed that adult constructions of children's competence and responsibility was likely to be affected by the duration and setting of their relationship with the child:

residential care workers, after school care workers, and community and youth workers all observe children over longer periods of time engaging in a wider range of activities in which children express much more autonomy and social agency than they may in the presence of more high status professionals whose assessments are much more influential in constructing the criteria for children's competency. (Cross, 2011, p. 29)

It seems likely that this argument might apply to differences between secondary subject teachers, who see many pupils relatively infrequently, and primary teachers, who by comparison work with the same pupils for most of the school day, for the school year, often several years, and across most school activities.

### **Evidence from studies of well-being and attainment through transition**

Most studies recognise that the changes referred to by Summerfield (above, p. 8) might affect mental well-being and/or learning achievement rather than responsibility or civic competence. There are hypothetical relationships between achievement and aspects of civic competence, though, since there might be co-correlative pedagogies involved. For example, in Scotland Topping et al. (Topping et al., 2007) suggested that an intervention focused on collaborative learning at primary school showed some demonstrable effect in secondary school achievement. Such effects are difficult to demonstrate conclusively, but they are worth noting since collaborative learning was one in-classroom engagement with pupil responsibility to which teachers in the present study referred.

Wider studies have also found that school students experience less autonomy in classrooms upon transition (Anderman and Midgley, 1997) although Galton (Galton, 2009) doubts the severity of this distinction, at least in England. Nonetheless, Munthe and Thuen (Munthe and Thuen, 2009) (also citing Midgley's USA studies) concluded that in Norway<sup>4</sup>:

Middle school classrooms, as compared to elementary school classrooms, are characterized by greater emphasis on teacher control and discipline and fewer opportunities for pupil decision making, choice, and self-management, less personal and positive teacher-pupil relationship (Munthe and Thuen, 2009, p. 564/565)

### **Pupils' views on transition**

There is some consistency with respect to what pupils say about transition between primary and secondary contexts. They generally express a mixture of anxiety and positive anticipation. Graham and Hill's (Graham and Hill, 2003) large, longitudinal, Scottish study identified anxieties that were consistent in kind, and priority, with many international studies:

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<sup>4</sup> A middle school is an institution between primary/elementary school and secondary/high school. They are rare in Scotland but common in the USA (where the structure of the school system often involves elementary, junior high, and high school).

The issue on which the highest numbers expressed fears about not coping well concerned the change from being the big children in primary school to the youngest at secondary. From a fixed choice list, the items they chose most often were social or non-academic, ie concerns about getting lost (77%), not knowing anyone (55%), and getting picked on (53%). The aspect of school work and the curriculum that worried them most was having more homework (53%). (Graham and Hill, 2003, p. 2)

There is also evidence that pupils look forward to new subjects, new kinds of resources not available at primary school, and new friends. In Chedzoy's (2005) study of 207 pupils in south-west England, who were surveyed before and after transition, 90% looked forward to the move, 96% thought there would be lots of interesting new things to learn, 87% thought they would feel more grown-up, and 55% thought they would make lots of new friends.

#### Differences between primary and secondary contexts

Identifying differences between the contexts of primary and secondary schools might be a means of examining issues of transition. There are Scottish studies that hint at differences in pupil voice and participation in primary and secondary schools outside the classroom. Statistically significant differences between primary and secondary schools in the percentage of staff and pupils reportedly involved in participation activities, found higher percentages more likely in primary schools (Cross et al., 2009). Tisdall's report from an *IPSOS Mori* survey (Scottish Consumer Council, 2007) of 1,969 secondary school students showed that those in the first year of secondary school (S1) were more likely to believe in the pupil council's efficacy, and were more likely to wish to stand for election to the council, than those in the later years of secondary schooling. One interpretation of this decline is that their preceding primary experiences of pupil councils were more positive than their subsequent secondary experiences.

Differences between primary and secondary schooling inform a general debate in transition practice and research over whether continuity or discontinuity is more or less beneficial (and therefore whether it should be intended). Galton et al. (2003) concluded that both are important. They argued that pupils' feelings of maturity and "status passage" in England were undermined by the growing continuity of pedagogical style between upper primary and lower secondary:

Associated with all such passages are rituals, and procedures and while a degree of continuity is important to reduce the level of anxiety when moving up a year it is also important for pupils to experience a degree of discontinuity, since if the transition did not reflect certain important changes in personal circumstance then pupils would not have any external indicators of their newly acquired status. (Galton and Britain, 2003, p.11)

The recent Scottish emphasis on policy continuity between primary and secondary schooling is therefore significant. Examples include *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009) and *Getting it Right for Every*

*Child (GiRFEC)*<sup>5</sup>. But different rates of policy uptake of these agendas, between the primary and secondary sectors, might affect the continuity or discontinuity of transition experience.

### **Evidence concerning civic competence and transition**

Finally, it is important to reiterate that there is very little research into the issue of transition and civic competence. Existing studies on participation (Cross et al., 2009) highlighted the need for such work. Some evidence suggests that pupils themselves were concerned about how they were treated before and after transition in terms of maturity (Deuchar, 2009, HMIE, 2006). While this issue has been shown to be relevant in pupil surveys, one reason for the lack of investigation might be that pupils rate the issue as relatively unimportant compared to other concerns at this time of transition (Zeedyk et al., 2003).

The Gordon Cook Foundation has therefore funded one of the first studies of its kind in this area. While the study is exploratory, it is clear that there is scope for considerably more inquiry into the matter, including into pupil views and national comparisons.

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<sup>5</sup> A wellbeing based multi-sector policy initiative concerning children and young people in Scotland: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright>

## Methods

Given the relatively small quantity of existing research about transition and civic competence, the present study was small-scale, qualitative and exploratory. We sought to work in four clusters of schools, each in a separate Local Authority.

### Access to schools

Access to schools was ultimately at head teacher discretion. In non-cluster work, attaining a target sample of given size and characteristics in a Local Authority typically involves seeking Local Authority approval and then approaching schools until the target number of head teachers agrees and the target sample pattern is achieved. In this study, the agreement of at least four linked schools were needed in order to secure access to the cluster.

In two Local Authorities, the Local Authority advertised the project to all clusters and then informed the researchers which cluster had nominated their schools to participate. In the remaining two Local Authorities, responsibility for recruitment reverted to the researchers after outline agreement at Local Authority level.

### School clusters

Four school clusters were accessed (three in Local Authorities in the northeast of Scotland and one cluster situated in a large conurbation in the west of Scotland) (see Appendix 1: Study sample, p. 31). Where responsibility for recruitment reverted to the researchers, contacts in non-governmental organisations working in the citizenship field in local schools suggested possible clusters, and school websites and handbooks were examined. In all cases the nature and purpose of the project was circulated in advance with the relevant consent information (see Appendix 2: Project information, p. 34).

Therefore, all clusters that participated in this study were found to have an explicit commitment to one or more of the following:

- citizenship education;
- well-articulated transition arrangements;
- promoting pupil participation;
- undertaking innovative practice in the area of pupil voice.

As a result the sample is likely to represent clusters and schools with recent or prospective interest in active citizenship and/or transition, and perhaps what might be termed “good practice” in these areas.

The clusters represent a range of urban, rural and town or suburban locations, as well as a range of relative socio-economic characteristics (see Appendix 1: Study sample, Table 2, p. 31).

### The teacher sample and interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 53 teachers (see Appendix 1: Study sample, Table 3, p. 32). In each school we asked to speak to a

head teacher or other senior manager, and staff with relevant expertise with transition or participation. The resulting sample constituted a cross section of teachers with various levels of experience, including newly qualified teachers and those with many years of experience, as well as a range of positions (i.e. classroom teachers and senior managers). Interview questions focused on three main areas of interest (see Appendix 3: Interview schedules, p. 35):

1. teachers' background and levels of experience;
2. teachers' views regarding pupil responsibility, leadership, participation, voice and decision-making, and the main ways in which these were promoted through pupils experiences at school;
3. teachers' understanding of the management of primary-secondary transition and their perceptions of the pupils' experience of transition.

### **Ethical considerations**

As in all research involving human subjects, abiding by ethical protocols that stress the importance of securing informed consent is essential in order to maintain good practice when conducting research. This research abided by the *British Educational Research Association* (BERA) guidelines. The *Moray House School of Education Ethics Committee* at The University of Edinburgh granted formal ethical approval for the study. In keeping with standard ethical requirements, all participants were reassured about confidentiality and the fact that no teacher or school would be named in this report or published findings, although in unpublished feedback to individual clusters anonymity would be less secure.

Teachers were provided with consent information that explained the purposes of this research (see Appendix 2: Project information, p. 34).

Research ethics also includes consideration of benefits to participants. An important aim for the study was to offer short, tailored reports on each cluster and their transitions arrangements, to each cluster. Participating schools viewed the prospect of this feedback positively.

## Findings

This section details the main findings arising from the interviews.

### What teachers said about participation, responsibility, leadership & voice

The interviewees identified numerous mechanisms that were thought to develop civic competence. They can be categorized as follows:

- 1) Committee membership/“responsible citizenship”, such as: pupil councils; teaching and learning committees; ambassadorial roles like handling visitors; in-class roles (e.g. being i/c jotters or tidiness).
- 2) Leadership/role modeling, such as: prefects or house captains; giving assemblies; “champions”, “experts”, peer teaching and “buddies”.
- 3) Participatory learning, such as: pupils setting and sharing their own targets; pupils making curriculum decisions; and emphases on co-operative learning;
- 4) Consultative participation, such as: surveying and consulting pupils as a matter of course regarding school developments; pupils translating school improvement plans into pupil-friendly language.

### Participation mechanisms: structural and responsive models

This study considered two main models that supported pupil participation in primary and secondary schools. While there was a familiar conventional model where forums for participation were well integrated into the structure of schools, a more reactive approach was also in evidence. The two models suggested different level of self-determination for pupils. The structural model usually involved pupils putting themselves forward for established participatory structures (such as committees or roles), reflecting a traditional notion of schooling as a set of arrangements provided by teachers for pupils to experience. Whereas a higher level of autonomy was implied in cases where pupils appeared to initiate developments that involved civic competence (such as money-raising activities). Primary and secondary school interviewees raised instances where they felt that initiatives were “pupil led” and the school was being sensitive and responsive to these:

They do all of that now I’m kind of in the background there for support or help but they do it [...] They co-ordinate who’s coming and how much it’s gonna cost and what profit and so on and so forth.

[Primary headteacher: 3/Pri/9/AD]

An implication of this approach might be that its success is more dependent on teachers’ and managers’ individual commitments and philosophies, compared with school level initiatives that are endorsed as a matter of policy (e.g. Pupil Councils). On the other hand, it was clear that national policy was also driving schools’ openness to pupil autonomy and initiative.



### Election, selection and the real world of life, learning and work

The mechanisms through which pupils came to participate in structural roles seemed relevant because they were indicative of how teachers thought of pupils as citizens.

Most of the structural roles tended to begin with an opt-in approach, where children and young people had to publically declare their interest in the role, or in representing their class:

They need to put themselves forward for wanting to do it and then they have to do a wee speech to the class saying why they should be picked. And then the class will vote on who they want for their reps.

[P7 Teacher: 4/Pri/15/AX]

For well-established school forums such as the Pupil Council, house system, prefects or senior pupil committees, the subsequent process often involved the pupil addressing the whole class, explaining how as a candidate they would represent the group, or producing a CV, or filling in a tailored application form for the job. In both sectors it was not uncommon that members of the management team to interview pupils for committee roles. Most teachers thought such “real life” selection processes were preparation for developing skills for “life, learning and work”.

In elected posts the successful candidate was decided by a pupil vote that was described as “very democratic” by interviewees. Only one interviewee referred openly to any manipulation of this process in order to ensure the success of a more desirable candidate. More common was discussion of assisting younger children to express themselves more effectively and confidently in these processes, as a means of creating a more level playing field in the face of differences in maturity or popularity.

Interviewees in both primary and secondary schools discussed their roles in encouraging pupils to apply. In both sectors there was recognition that some pupils simply would not wish to go through such selection processes, or be chosen. On the other hand there was some effort, particularly in primary schools, to encourage pupils to take on responsibilities of one kind or another. There were revealing instances where teachers referred to a specific child that they had identified as being a little shy or reticent with regard to taking on a role or extra responsibility but who was assessed as having potential that needed to be nurtured and encouraged. Interviewee accounts of this kind tended to be “success stories” in the sense that these children were said to benefit enormously by being put slightly under pressure to nominate themselves for the pupil council or another position of responsibility:

One girl in particular if she had to do a Burns poem she would just say the poem. Whereas this year I coerced her into trying the “Festival of Spoken Words Competition” and she won it! .... And her mum cried, I cried and she is still in shock. But that will set her up for life.

[P7 teacher: 1/Pri/2/F]

When interviewees were asked if there was a particular kind of pupil who volunteered themselves for formal roles, their initial responses were often non-committal. Some primary and secondary teachers however indicated that volunteers tended to be children with interested and supportive parents, or who had a special interest in wider school issues (e.g. green/eco-friendly issues), or who were relatively confident and popular. In schools in which a participatory ethos was strongly developed, many teachers maintained that they had to a greater or lesser extent achieved a safe environment in which pupils reflected on their own skills and were happy to put themselves forward on the basis that they were a good person to take that role.

### **The self-reflective learner: taking responsibility and co-operative learning in the classroom**

A commonly held teacher view in both primary and secondary schools was that pupils should take responsibility for their own learning in the classroom. While it was acknowledged that not every pupil was capable of doing this, pupils were generally expected to be able to identify next steps in their learning and in many cases to be self-aware and a self-reflective learner who knew their strengths and weaknesses.

Indeed, according to more experienced teachers, this expectation was a significant change in teaching practices. In the past pupils were said to be “kept in the dark” about the rationale for learning particular topics or approaches. Today there was felt to be a heightened awareness of different learning styles and of the merits of discussing learning with pupils:

And so children from our nursery schools – we do responsive planning in the nursery – so children from age three right up to primary seven have opportunities on a regular basis to say what they want to learn and how they want to learn it and how they want to be assessed...

[Primary headteacher: 2/Pri/16/AZ]

Most primary school teachers and some secondary school interviewees also raised the topic of co-operative learning<sup>6</sup> as an important group context whereby pupils could foster responsibility and participate in learning in the classroom. A significant majority of interviewees who took part in this study – from four different Local Authorities in Scotland – said that they had received in-service training on co-operative learning. In general, primary teachers viewed this co-operative learning model in a constructive way. A few secondary interviewees were more critical of the approach.

These pedagogies were central to the development of a participatory ethos in primary schools and one important difference between P7 and S1, in the

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<sup>6</sup> Co-operative learning is, by definition, structured group learning in which specific interdependencies between learners are fostered in the pursuit of a collective goal. Less-structured group working is also often misrepresented as co-operative learning.

development of civic competence, is the relative rates at which primary and secondary institutions have responded to a range of curriculum reforms such as *Curriculum for Excellence*, *Assessment is for Learning*, and co-operative learning.

### **Distributed leadership, seniority & juniority**

The notion that pupils should be provided with opportunities to “shine” as leaders appeared in the discourse of many interviewees. A common example was a group of pupils taking the lead in a whole school assembly. Indeed school assemblies proved a common site where interviewees thought leadership skills could and should be promoted:

I see more in the school now than in the past is...year group activities like assemblies. We try and have them led by pupils.

[Secondary deputy headteacher: 4/Sec/13/AP]

A wide range of practices in both sectors amounted to leadership within the overall functioning of the school institution. Several schools also highlighted the fact that pupils had been the recipients of specialist training for various such leadership roles.

It is of note that these kinds of practices resonate with new forms of management in schooling, often referred to as “distributed leadership”. Some primary headteachers would discuss distributed leadership in relation to “moving” staff thinking about pupil participation, at the same time as they discussed pupil participation itself. One secondary teacher explained how school practices for teachers and pupils ran along parallel lines in her school:

If you want to take on an initiative or you think something’s important then she [the headteacher] will give you that responsibility, you know, and she will empower you to take that on. So I think it’s the same model for the children.

[Secondary teacher: 4/Sec/13/AQ]

A second issue concerns the seniority and juniority of pupils within a school institution. This study was predicated on the suggestion that, on transition between primary and secondary, pupils move from a position of seniority to one of juniority. Across the schools the study found that there was some favouring of senior pupils in structural models of participation, responsibility and leadership. Pupil councils were generally (if recently) equally representative of all ages, although there were cases in larger schools where junior pupils were less represented by design. As a rule house leadership arrangements involved more senior pupils, and in some cases there was a Senior Pupils’ Committee running alongside other structures. And most of the roles involving buddying, “peer” educating or monitoring typically involved the more senior pupils assisting the more junior ones, albeit that the seniors were also deriving valuable learning from the arrangement.

Explanations for the influence of juniority/seniority varied. In primary schools there were arguments about the need for foundational skills in order to perform

basic tasks. However it was notable that in pupil councils, where very young pupils were to contribute as a matter of policy, ways around this had been devised, as indeed they probably would be in the case of any other dimension of (dis)ability. There were a few references to “the natural order of” institutions and to rites of passage within an institution. But there were counter-discourses as well:

I think a lot of the mindset is “Oh, they’re only wee, they’re only wee”. And I think they [P1s] kind of get looked over – you know, “They can’t do this, and they can’t do that”. But I think they can do a lot more than what we give them credit for.

[Primary teacher: 2/Pri/5/S]

All of these require further investigation, as do some observations that the relevant characteristic of senior pupils was not necessarily their seniority, but that they were about to transition out of the institution and were therefore more urgently in need of preparation for responsibility and autonomy than were the juniors. This thinking, in particular, seemed significant in understanding transition.

### **What teachers said about transition**

Transition arrangements in each of the four clusters were discussed in the interviews for this study. In most clusters transition arrangements were thought to be improving but also capable of further development. Given the self-selection of these clusters it was not clear how general would be this view beyond the study schools.

### **Transition arrangements**

Strategies for transition in the four clusters contained common elements and these are highlighted below. In some cases more elaborate transition projects were being developed.

#### *Information and staff discussions*

Each pupil would be discussed in a meeting between their primary teacher and a secondary guidance teacher, in most cases routinely, to ensure that important social information was advised to the secondary school. “Enhanced transition” for children with more complex needs was highlighted by several schools and involved tailored transition arrangements involving parents and other social services.

Otherwise there was a sense that the range and flow of information about pupils was always improving. Standardised data about pupils was collated and transferred, increasingly electronically:

Well every, all that information then gets sucked into e1<sup>7</sup>, well all the [academic attainment] information is in e1 already. But the ASN [Additional Support Needs] and the special needs issues, learning support issues get put into a database within e1.

[Secondary deputy headteacher: 3/Sec/7/W]

The pupils themselves were often involved in constructing pupil profiles and portfolios, which were transferred to the secondary school as well. Critically, for this study, this latter data would include information about the pupil's participation in areas of leadership or responsibility.

Some primary teachers were skeptical regarding how much of this information was used, and by whom. The general view was that better dissemination and use of this transiting data would be an improvement, suggesting that the focus on transition was generally underpinned by an investment in the merits of progression and continuity.

#### *Visits to the high school*

One or more days of pupil visiting to the high school were normally arranged, in which pupils would be arranged into their proposed S1 classes and thereby meet fellow pupils from different primary schools. They would often follow a series of lessons, and in doing so learn to navigate their way around the school to different classes and different teachers for different subjects. There might also be team-building challenges, such as "CSI" science investigations, or team sports events. The number and style of these events varied from cluster to cluster.

#### *Visits from the high school*

It was not uncommon for a member of staff from the secondary school to visit the Primary 7 pupils to discuss transition, with or without some pupil representatives from the secondary school. This was often a member of staff with responsibility for transition and not necessarily a subject teacher. Together with discussions with the primary school staff, the purposes of these visits was typically to provide information, answer questions and allay fears (often described as "myth-busting").

#### *Other arrangements*

More complex plans and arrangements were in place in some clusters. Staff visits, particularly of secondary subject teaching staff to primary schools and classes, appeared to be a growing if variable element. These were sometimes associated with cluster-wide transition projects, the most complex of which were bridging units. A bridging unit is designed to develop continuity of study from P7 through S1. One example involved the study of the graphic novel of *Kidnapped* in P7, and the Scots novel version in S1, and the development of a portfolio of writing about it that spanned the transition.

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<sup>7</sup> e1 An educational management information system marketed by Pearson that allows web-based access and update to individual attendance, attainment, behaviour and other data across an education institution.

The merit of secondary and primary teachers seeing each other's work was widely recognized and there was a desire for more cross-sector visiting and shadowing, not least because secondary teachers involved in such work tended to recognize the high levels of responsibility and leadership that primary pupils displayed:

And, you know, quite a few of our teachers [who visited cluster primaries] have said, 'we need to raise our expectations of these children. They're so independent at primary'.

[Secondary deputy headteacher: 1/SEC/1/B]

### **The purposes and evaluation of transition arrangements**

Similar intended purposes were asserted for these various transition arrangements, namely: the development of academic continuity and progression (in literacy and numeracy especially); to provide pupils with a sense of that continuity; for the secondary to decide how to make up classes; to meet other children in the same cluster who will be at secondary; to reduce anxiety, including by recognizing that others share the same worries; to learn new institutional structures and pedagogies; and to begin to develop high school class identities through teambuilding.

Apart from the implied facts of the differences between primary and secondary schools (which will be discussed later), for the present study two additional sets of purposes are worthy of exploration. These were: the idea of rites of passage; and transition arrangements that were themselves intended to develop or showcase pupils' abilities in civic competence, responsibility and decision-making.

There was some recognition of the rite of passage from primary to secondary school:

Now it's about Christmas time – they've had enough! Yeah, it just seems to be getting earlier and earlier. But yeah, they're ready to go. They're ready for that change. I mean they're ready to go into different... move on...

[Primary teacher: 2/Pri/5/S]

However it is fair to say that the majority of interviewees' professed understandings of the purposes of transition *management* would better be described as the intended improvement of continuity – or at least the management of any disruption due to *discontinuity* – rather than the development of some positive discontinuity such as a rite of passage. Both were recognised, but the latter was perhaps taken for granted or to be self-arising.

It is worth highlighting that there were transition arrangements that appeared to engage specifically in matters of pupil citizenship. They exemplified some trend towards transition or "bridging" arrangements being about more than traditional curricular matters such as literacy, numeracy and science.

In the study clusters there was widespread recognition that transition arrangements were improving. Any change in S1 experience over time could not readily be attributed to specific transition arrangements. These were rarely assessed, though some significant studies of transition had been undertaken, including some that involved seeking pupil views. Nonetheless there was a belief that transition arrangements could always be improved and that it was a growing priority.

#### **Transition ambitions, priorities and resources**

In teacher discussion of transition, it was clear that interviewees understood well that even where transition was thought to be a priority, active citizenship was a relatively low transition priority within that. Such priorities emerged in the face of resource constraints.

In all clusters interviewees could easily imagine improved transition arrangements. But although cluster-wide thinking was significant, it seemed clear that it was the secondary schools that ultimately determined transition arrangements because it was in secondary schools that restrictions on resources for transition obtained most acutely. This was partly because they often needed to match several other institutions for any cluster-wide plan to take place:

we were trying to get the maths teachers and the P7 teachers together a fortnight ago [...] We needed five staff to go out to cover the P7 teachers, we've got four probationers in the school plus [the deputy headteacher] volunteered [...] That's not gonna be the case next year cos there is no capacity in maths [...] So it's kind of a bit of a 'hit or a miss' we would like to have that link but we're never able to plan it in the sustained... way that we like; it just kind of happens through capacity.

[Secondary headteacher: 3/Sec/7/V]

## **Analysis: teacher perceptions, school differences and citizenship**

### **Introduction**

This section attempts some analytical synthesis of the data described in the previous section. The argument is made that the apparent reduction in pupil citizenship in lower secondary is explained by three factors. First, pupils are entering a much more fragmented set of relationships and so it takes longer for the secondary school to “know” the pupils sufficiently to appreciate their civic competencies, even in the face of transition information about them. Second, for both primary and secondary schools the development of civic competence is partly a matter of readying pupils for transitions to contexts where greater autonomy and independence is expected. It follows that much of this development is concentrated on more senior pupils in both institutions, and therefore the greatest possible difference exists between upper primary and lower secondary. Third, pupils themselves seek some discontinuity from their primary school experience upon transition. Therefore the provision of palatable opportunities for the progression of their active citizenship is not as straightforward as managing their progression in academic matters, which are embraced more enthusiastically by pupils, perhaps because of their apparent novelty.

In order to make this argument, the section additionally introduces interviewees’ perceptions of pupils as citizens (including, in a tentative and additionally generalizing way, their perceptions of pupils’ own views), and the differences between primary and secondary schools are also discussed.

### **Teacher perceptions of pupils in P7 and S1**

Primary interviewees were asked about the type of attributes and skills with which they intended pupils left primary school, while secondary interviewees were asked about the kind of characteristics children brought with them when they started at secondary school. Their responses are summarized in Table 1:



**Table 1 Summary of interviewees' estimations of pupils at the end of P7 and the start of S1. There is some generalization in this summary.**

Primary interviewees views (of pupils in P7)	Secondary interviewees views (of pupils in S1)
Confident & vocal	Confident & vocal
Skilled co-operators	Skilled co-operators
Caring, moral & socially aware	
"Ready" and en-skilled for the next stage in life, learning and work	
[in S1] deskilled in civic competence	
	Under-motivated to active citizenship
	Enthusiastic & keen and the classroom

Attributes and qualities of pupils highlighted by primary interviewees were those of "a well-rounded individual". For secondary teachers a common assessment of first year pupils was that of enthusiastic learners who seemed particularly skilled in co-operative learning. Secondary interviewees said that children were, for the most part, very eager to learn when they arrived at secondary school:

They're very enthusiastic when they come they're excited about coming and they are very willing to learn.

[Secondary teacher: 4/Sec/13/AQ]

"Confident individuals" were very much in evidence in interviewees' discourse, in keeping with the thrust of the *Curriculum for Excellence* capacity. Secondary interviewees were sometimes surprised about the levels of confidence they witnessed in new pupils, which suggested that this was a developing phenomenon. They noted the willingness of pupils to speak out and offer their opinions in class, being comfortable and unfazed with "getting things wrong". It seems relevant to note, for later contrast, that this confidence would be expected given the emphasis put on the development of confidence and voice in primary schools.

Certainly I think that the kids are much more confident now. Not in an arrogant kind of way just in a more self assured way.

[Secondary teacher: 1/Sec/1/D]

To have confidence in their own abilities; self-assurance: just respect for others.

[Primary 7 teacher: 1/Pri/2/F]

Notwithstanding this apparent classroom confidence, another salient image found in interviewees' accounts was that of an active citizen who became "de-skilled" on arrival at secondary school. Perhaps the most critical account in the study was by this experienced primary headteacher:

[when they] left us you know [they] could stand up speak without notes... good eye contact, changing voice, you know had done the PowerPoint presentation or a poster, [And they come back down to us and are] standing reading something that an adult has written from a piece of paper. What happened to you? Now, I know that puberty kicks in and you know teenage stuff and there's all that going on, but it's because they get lost in the system... because no-one asks them to do anything [...] And whilst, you know, I think we've moved on a bit from that "fresh start" [idea], there's still not enough of building on the children's actual citizenship skills at all.

[Primary headteacher: 3/Pri/9/AD]

For the informant above, lack of continuity in the development of citizenship was a central issue. But for other interviewees continuity was the problem, particularly if it took the form of the repetition of opportunities for the development of civic competence. For example, tackling litter and other eco-related topics were thought to be "overdone" at secondary due to the fact they were covered in-depth at primary school. In other words, pupils were thought to seek *discontinuity* from their primary experience, seeing transition as a rite of passage.

Both these views deserve attention and the following sections concerning the differences between primary and secondary schools help to synthesise these arguments.

### **Similarities and differences between primary and secondary schools**

One approach to examining transition is to investigate what the concept itself tends to imply: that the two institutions between which transition occurs are different and that the extent of these differences might affect the nature and degree of transition anticipated.

Three areas are explored. The first concerns how the pupils' responsibilities for themselves increase upon transition because of the changed relational landscape, and how teachers perceive this change. The second examines how that discontinuity might be lessened. And the third concerns whether that discontinuity should be lessened, in the face of some interviewees' perceptions of how pupils' perceive transition themselves, and of pupils' different motivations to engage with citizenship in upper primary and lower secondary.

### Responsibility and differences in the relationship landscape on transition

A primary school teacher and her pupils would get to know each other very well. A pupil would for the most part have the same class teacher, and a class teacher would for the most part have the same couple of dozen pupils, for most of their school activity, for most of the year. At secondary school pupils entered into much larger multiples of relationships with teachers, and in any one academic session teachers would teach hundreds of pupils. At secondary school, responsibility for the pupil-as-a-whole therefore falls to Form teachers, Guidance teachers, and various other pastoral systems (such as 'houses'). This relative fragmentation of the relationship landscape is a central difference between secondary school and primary school.

The transfer of standard transition information under these conditions would be difficult. A teacher wrote that information with a relatively deep knowledge of the pupil, or a pupil wrote a self-reflection rooted in the relatively narrow set of relationships encountered in the primary school. But the readership context is entirely different, with no similarly singular or deep relationship through which the information could create the intended continuity. The development of this information might be a critical reflective act, but it is a much more problematic communicative act.

A more central aspect of the change in relational arrangements upon transition was the implied heightening of the pupil's personal responsibility to get the most out of her newly time-limited relationships with a plethora of teachers:

But...in three periods a week I might have to spend just these three very small chunks of time, you know, before I could then say, 'now, off you pop and do it'. So perhaps that's, you know, [S1 pupils] have, they do, I think they have not more responsibility [than P7 pupils], the same amount of responsibility, just being put upon them in a short space of time...

[Secondary school teacher involved in literacy transition project:  
2/Sec/4/M]

Some primary interviewees aimed to develop the autonomy, independence and resilience of their senior pupils precisely in anticipation of this change in relationships and responsibility upon transition:

Well what I started this year was I actually photo-copied the [secondary school's] planners and gave [the P7 pupils] them from Easter to use them to get themselves organised for homework [...] Just making them more accountable for everything that they're doing and if they say, "well my mum's not done that", well I pick up on it and say, "well mum's not going to be there for you next year, you need to organize yourselves".

[Primary 7 teacher: 1/Pri/17/BB]

Civic competence and transition were therefore directly related. Most primary and secondary interviewees (including both of those quoted above) tended to view this new burden of responsibility for multiple relationships after transition as a positive thing for pupils. Several secondary interviewees commented on the

increasing readiness of new S1 pupils to undertake these kinds of responsibility. Though there were also some notes of caution about some pupils “getting lost” in the myriad of relationships.

However it is of wider importance that both primary and secondary schools saw the development of civic competence as being preparatory to transition (from primary to secondary school, or from secondary school to other destinations). If the development of voice, responsibility, leadership, participation and decision-making are thought of as means to that end, then efforts to develop these are likely to be focused on the senior pupils in both sectors. The difference between upper primary and lower secondary will therefore be acute.

### Managing continuity in relationships across transition

One indication of the relevance of the above analysis of different relationship contexts in primary and secondary schools lay in some of the interviewees’ responses and ideas about developing civic competence in lower secondary. The remapping of teacher-pupil relationships in lower secondary to make it more continuous with upper primary was advocated by this primary headteacher:

the ideal way to deliver S1 and S2 is to have for the first year certainly I think groups of teachers leading the learning. So that you have more teachers [than in primary] but you have a set group of teachers [rather than the full complement of different subject teachers].

[Primary school headteacher: 2/Pri/16/AZ]

In practice such remapping was already being considered in some secondary schools, at least in the balance between pastoral and curriculum time. This teacher highlighted the relationship between the development of citizenship and “knowing the pupils” in additional pastoral time:

I think [citizenship is] one of the purposes certainly. I think [extra Form Time] is allowing us as Form Tutors to know far better the, the kids within our classes.

[Secondary teacher: 1/Sec/1/D]

Moreover, *Curriculum for Excellence*, and related emphases on co-operative learning and formative assessment, meant that the divisions between curriculum and pupil responsibility, or curriculum and pastoral time, were breaking down, albeit more dramatically and rapidly in primary schools:

and this is the interesting thing about *Curriculum for Excellence* that the ethos and life of the school community and personal achievement are now part of the curriculum. They’re not add-ons, they’re not extras. There’s no such thing as extra-curricular really.

[Primary Head Teacher: 3/Pri/10/AH]

Since such policies are influencing both primary and secondary schools, it is reasonable to hypothesise that there will be greater convergence and continuity between the two sectors in relation to pupils’ active citizenship. Perhaps in the

present moment of this study, however, there is divergence because primary schools have embraced such policies more rapidly and fully than secondary schools.

However teachers' perceptions of the differences in pupils' interest in active citizenship, between upper primary and lower secondary, suggest that convergence of experience between the two sectors might not be sufficient to manage civic competence across transition.

### **Differences in pupil engagement and civic competence on transition**

This section explores perceived differences between primary and secondary schools in the propensity of pupils to engage with opportunities to develop civic competence. In particular it focuses on the extent to which in secondary schools it was left much more up to the pupil to engage with opportunities. It is worth reiterating that the study is based on teacher perceptions, not interviews with pupils.

Neither primary nor secondary school interviewees were keen to push reluctant pupils into positions of responsibility, but they would work with pupils' talents:

'Cos not everybody wants to be a star sort of thing out there maybe speaking or fronting something but would like to help, 'cos they've got skills they're really good organisers or they want to, you know they take notes or whatever.

[Primary headteacher: 3 / Pri / 9 / AD]

Primary schools more clearly articulated one or more overall strategies for engaging pupils with active citizenship roles, however, including:

- (a) seeking to create a 'have a go' ethos in which pupils might generate their own possibilities for leadership or responsibility -

we have an individual who has quite complex difficulties but is quite high-achieving. And so he- the ASN base wanted to travel to Edinburgh - so he organised the Skipathon, so he wrote the letters, he produced all the information for teachers, he designed the timetable.

[Primary deputy Head Teacher: 3/Pri/9/AE]

- (b) attempting to expand the range of opportunities so that more and more of their pupils could opt in to something -

and as I say, at different levels, all children have responsibility for something, you know? [...] I think the thing is to make sure that there are opportunities

[Primary Head Teacher: 3/Pri/10/AH]

- (c) focusing specifically on exploiting the talents of individual pupils by inventing roles in which those talents could be turned into responsibilities -

Everybody is involved in something that's appropriate to their own talents and their own skills. It's not just a case of lip service to turn round and say "This is a job – let's give it to Johnny". It's about looking at the children...

[Primary Head Teacher: 2/Pri/6/U]

What was striking was that in all these cases the goal appeared to include an assumption of responsibility, participation, decision-making or leadership by every pupil.

In secondary schools the opportunities for participation were thought to be less taken up:

Their primary sevens all have specific duties. [...] I think we'll be honest to say that we don't mirror that, and we don't get the same responses, the same enthusiasm from them when they move. [...]

[Secondary deputy headteacher: 2/Sec/4/L]

The above quotation highlighted not only the school's possible under-provision of opportunity but also the perceived reduced demand for that provision. In this particular case the rite of passage was thought to be of possible relevance:

[our Active Schools coordinator] has pupils in primary who are heavily involved in lots and lots and lots of sport. And when they come to secondary as well they drift away. And they decide that they don't want, it's not cool to take part in school teams and that sort of thing.

[Secondary deputy headteacher: 2/Sec/4/L]

Similarly, pupil desire to distance themselves from their former "primary identity" was observed by this primary teacher who taught a S1 science lesson as part of cluster activity, thus encountering her former P7 pupils:

... I found that my kids kind of stayed away from me, that were in my [secondary school] lesson, and they were a bit more, 'I'm too cool for Primary School', kind of thing.

[Primary teacher: 1/Pri/12/AO]

In the following case the idea that pupils reinvent themselves was also expressed, but in this case the reinvention is in relation to pupils themselves perceiving their juniority:

the more I work with the primaries and the more I work with them I realise that they, some of them just go into a bit of neutral gear when they come here. They think, 'oh I don't have to do that, I don't need to take responsibility, they've got the seniors to do that already'.

[Secondary deputy headteacher: 3/Sec/7/W]

## Conclusions and recommendations

This study has identified a complex of perceptions that help to explain why the development of pupils' civic competence appears to be discontinuous across the primary-secondary transition:

- there was a difference in the relationship context between primary and secondary school, so that pupils were assumed to be more independent and the school would take longer to get to know of their civic competencies;
- the assumed increase in independence upon transition meant that both primary and secondary schools tended to focus the development of civic competence on their senior pupils;
- the recognition of the need to work with the civic competencies of lower secondary pupils was in part met with consideration of how to achieve greater convergence between relationship contexts of upper primary and lower secondary school;
- but there was also some recognition that many pupils sought discontinuity upon transition from primary to secondary and that the provision of "primary-like" opportunities for active citizenship was not sufficient to encourage participation, even while pupils were showing considerable enthusiasm and skill in their classroom learning.

These analyses are related in ways that explain the difficulties faced in managing lower secondary schooling. Their complexity suggests the following recommendations.

### Collaboration and interchange between sectors

First, it is clear from this study that visiting and shadowing between primary and secondary staff is very important and beneficial, particularly for secondary staff to recognise the potential capabilities of incoming pupils as well as the breadth of their primary school experiences.

### Building on national policy drivers to justify collaboration

Second, while the resourcing of this activity is not straightforward it should be given some priority, and national policy drivers for continuity of experience, or at least continuity of pupil-management, might justify this.

### Minimize replication and be cautious about continuity

However, third, there is little merit in replicating upper primary experiences in lower secondary in the context of active citizenship. Even where national policy emphasises continuity, and *academic* needs justify progression, and some pupils require enhanced and less "sudden" transition, care should be taken to recognise what teachers perceived as pupils' interest in the novelty of secondary school. The provision of lower secondary opportunities for the development of civic competence is perceived to be less effective where the opportunities appear to pupils to be similar to their upper primary experience. Such provision might prove more successful if it permitted some rite of passage despite current policy drives to develop greater continuity of experience.

### Re-think pupil civic competence

How, then, to acknowledge and build upon pupils' high-level civic competencies, in lower secondary school, while allowing them the space to renew themselves as citizens as they leave primary school? One way of approaching that paradox might be to re-think the nature of the arriving pupil and the educational idea of civic competence. Secondary schools might accept pupils' civic competence at face value and not as an educational achievement that must be assessed and progressed for future transitions to life, learning and work. Pupils in lower secondary school might be better understood as a resource, active citizens already and in their own right. What uses could be made of their powers of participation, decision-making, leadership and responsibility, irrespective of pupil outcomes?

### Research with pupils

These are partly abstract recommendations, but they are predicated on allowing most pupils rite of passage *in place of* progression in this particular field. However, this study is generalizing the views of teachers, who are in turn generalizing their perceptions of pupils. The detail of any cluster's new approaches to lower secondary would best come from studies involving the cluster's pupils (as researchers as well as subjects). Indeed a sustained focus on the perceptions of pupils might itself be a means of re-thinking lower secondary schooling in productive and authentic ways.



## Appendix 1: Study sample

**Table 2 Study schools.** Each of four clusters includes one secondary school and 3-4 'feeder' primaries. All school characteristic data is from Scottish Government school contact data<sup>8</sup> except FSM (free school meal) data, calculated from school meal data<sup>9</sup>. Data has been significantly rounded to improve anonymity: to nearest 50 (school roll); nearest 10 (num staff); nearest 5% (percentage FSM). Cluster number and school number in the first column are arbitrarily assigned by the study. FTE (full time equivalent)

Cluster / stage / school	Location	Roll	Num staff (FTE)	Num staff interviewed	% FSM (national eligibility)	% pupils minority ethnic
<b>1 / Sec / 1</b>	Town	1050	80	4	5%	< 5%
<b>1 / Pri / 12</b>	Rural	50	5	3	-	5-10%
<b>1 / Pri / 3</b>	Suburban	350	20	4	5%	< 5%
<b>1 / Pri / 2</b>	Rural	100	10	2	5%	< 5%
<b>1 / Pri / 17</b>	Suburban	350	20	3	10%	5-10%
<b>2 / Sec / 4</b>	Inner city	950	80	6	25 %	> 20%
<b>2 / Pri / 5</b>	Inner city	450	30	3	30 %	> 20%
<b>2 / Pri / 6</b>	Inner city	250	10	1	40%	> 20%
<b>2 / Pri / 16</b>	Inner city	300	20	1	30 %	> 20%
<b>3 / Sec / 7</b>	Urban	600	50	4	10%	< 5%
<b>3 / Pri / 8</b>	Urban	200	10	4	20%	10-20%
<b>3 / Pri / 9</b>	Urban	250	20	3	20%	< 5%
<b>3 / Pri / 10</b>	Suburban	200	10	3	5%	10-20%
<b>3 / Pri / 11</b>	Suburban	300	20	3	10%	< 5%
<b>4 / Sec / 13</b>	Urban	1000	80	4	20%	5-10%
<b>4 / Pri / 14</b>	Town	400	20	3	25%	10-20%
<b>4 / Pri / 15</b>	Suburban	350	20	3	5%	5-10%

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/Datasets/contactdetails>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/SchoolMealsDatasets/schmeals2013>

**Table 3 Participant interviewees in the study. Cluster, school and teacher codes in the first column are arbitrarily assigned by the study (cf Table 2). T (teacher), DHT (deputy head teacher), HT (headteacher), PT (principal teacher), SFL (support for learning), e.g. P7 (Primary 7 class), NA (not known)**

Cluster / sector / school / teacher	Role & relevant responsibility	M/F	Experience (yrs)
1 / Sec / 1 / A	DHT Leadership / Transition	F	30+
1 / Sec / 1 / B	DHT Cluster	F	20+
1 / Sec / 1 / C	T Biology & FairTrade	F	4
1 / Sec / 1 / D	T Geography & India Exchange	F	7
1 / Pri / 2 / E	HT	M	10
1 / Pri / 2 / F	T P7	F	NA
1 / Pri / 3 / H	HT	F	30+
1 / Pri / 3 / I	PT P6 & 7 & Fairtrade Group	F	4
1 / Pri / 3 / J	PT & Pupil council	F	10
1 / Pri / 3 / K	T P7 & Eco Team	F	5
1 / Pri / 12 / AN	HT	M	20+
1 / Pri / 12 / AO	T P5-7 (comp) / Pupil Council	F	5
1 / Pri / 17 / BA	DHT	F	NA
1 / Pri / 17 / BB	T P7	F	3
1 / Pri / 17 / BC	T P7 & Eco committee	F	1
2 / Sec / 4 / L	DHT & Transition	F	20+
2 / Sec / 4 / M	T English & Transition project	F	16
2 / Sec / 4 / N	SFL T	F	15+
2 / Sec / 4 / O	SFL PT & Transition	F	15+
2 / Sec / 4 / P	T Maths & House Head	M	16
2 / Sec / 4 / Q	T Geography	M	10
2 / Pri / 5 / R	DHT Transition / Pupil council	F	19
2 / Pri / 5 / S	T P7 (recent) & P4	F	18
2 / Pri / 5 / T	HT	F	NA
2 / Pri / 6 / U	HT	F	20+
2 / Pri / 16 / AZ	HT	F	14
3 / Sec / 7 / V	HT	M	25+
3 / Sec / 7 / W	DHT & Transition	M	30+
3 / Sec / 7 / X	DHT Pupil Council / Parlmnt.	F	NA
3 / Sec / 7 / Y	T & Transition Summer School	F	4
3 / Pri / 8 / Z	HT	F	20
3 / Pri / 8 / AA	PT & Transition	F	19
3 / Pri / 8 / AB	T P7	F	20
3 / Pri / 8 / AC	T	F	41
3 / Pri / 9 / AD	HT	F	25+
3 / Pri / 9 / AE	DHT	F	15+
3 / Pri / 9 / AF	T & Citizenship	F	16
3 / Pri / 10 / AH	HT	F	20+
3 / Pri / 10 / AI	DHT	F	40
3 / Pri / 10 / AJ	T P7	F	7

Cluster / sector / school / teacher	Role & relevant responsibility	M/F	Experience (yrs)
3 / Pri / 11 / AK	HT	F	15+
3 / Pri / 11 / AL	DHT & P7	F	15+
3 / Pri / 11 / AM	T P7	F	2
4 / Sec / 13 / AP	DHT	M	15+
4 / Sec / 13 / AQ	PT Pupil Support & English	F	20+
4 / Sec / 13 / AR	T Geography & Act. Guidance	F	14
4 / Sec / 13 / AS	T Home-link	F	NA
4 / Pri / 14 / AT	DHT	F	35
4 / Pri / 14 / AU	T P7	F	18
4 / Pri / 14 / AV	PT	F	10+
4 / Pri / 15 / AW	DHT	F	NA
4 / Pri / 15 / AX	T P7	F	NA
4 / Pr / 15 / AY	T P7	F	2

## Appendix 2: Project information

After the pilot phase the formal information provided to participating schools and teachers about the project (as part of the voluntary consent process) was as follows:

### **PUPIL PARTICIPATION, PUPIL VOICE AND PRIMARY/SECONDARY TRANSITION**

#### **About the project**

The background to this project is pupil participation or 'voice' and the transition from primary to secondary school. We are interested in teachers' views about this within a range of clusters in a range of local authorities. We are dealing with 3 Local Authorities, 3 clusters, 12 schools and 48 teachers in total. We will also undertake some pilot work.

#### **Who funded this project?**

The project is funded by the Gordon Cook Foundation who are an educational trust that support values and citizenship education.

#### **Who we are**

Jane Brown<sup>10</sup> and Hamish Ross<sup>11</sup> are professional researchers at the Moray House School of Education at the University of Edinburgh. Hamish and Jane have worked together over a number years. They both have a special interest in citizenship and democracy in schools and Hamish also works in primary and secondary teacher education.

#### **Why your school was chosen**

Your school was approached in the first instance because it is part of a cluster in which the Local Authority understood there to be on-going citizenship education. We also hope that across the whole project we will be recruiting schools that serve of communities that have a range of socio-economic characteristics.

#### **Interviews with teachers and staff**

The main element of the project is a series of short interviews with teachers. We would like to ask teachers about activities throughout the school that emphasise pupil participation, pupil voice or pupil responsibility, how they see the purposes of this activity, and their perceptions of this kind of activity and citizenship education around the transition stages (upper primary and lower secondary).

#### **Benefits for the school**

We are aware that there are on-going discussions around transition within clusters, so we will offer to your cluster a summary of what we find out from your cluster, which might be a useful addition to those discussions.

#### **How the information will be used and confidentiality**

In addition to the above, The Gordon Cook Foundation will produce a summary report of the project and we expect to write academic papers about it. We will not identify schools or staff in these reports. This project has the approval of Moray House School of Education Ethics Committee.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/education/about-us/people/academic-staff?person\\_id=135&cw\\_xml=profile.php](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/education/about-us/people/academic-staff?person_id=135&cw_xml=profile.php)

<sup>11</sup> [www.ed.ac.uk/education/hamish-ross](http://www.ed.ac.uk/education/hamish-ross)

## **Appendix 3: Interview schedules**

After the pilot phase the semi-structured interview schedules used with the primary and secondary teachers, respectively, were as follows. The pilot phase (amounting to several interviews in one of the study clusters, resulted in a decision to replace the term “citizenship” with the phrase “pupil participation/voice”, although the conversations often also referred to pupil “decision-making”, “responsibility” and “leadership”.

### **SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

#### **Introductory/background questions**

- Could you tell me how long you have been at this school? Where else have you worked in your teaching career? How did you find it compared to other schools?
- What classes do you teach?
- Are you involved with particular year groups more than others?
- Are you responsible for any pupil participation/responsibility across the school? Could you tell me more about that? (Prompt: ‘citizenship’ as necessary).

#### **School transitions**

- I understand you have X feeder primaries for this high school?
- What do you know about the primaries?
- Who liaises with the primaries from this end? What are their role(s) exactly?
- In terms of preparation for the move, what kind of things are they doing in primary 7? Is this co-ordinated across the X schools?
- And what kinds of things are arranged at this end?
- In terms of responsibility, participation, citizenship, what kinds of attributes/knowledge do pupils bring with them when they arrive in first year? Is there anything, in particular that stands out?
- Is there any aspect of the transition arrangements that might be understood as being specifically about responsibility or participation (or citizenship)?

#### **Approach to citizenship and pupils**

- In terms of pupil participation and responsibility, what kind of activities do you promote in this school?
- In terms of pupil responsibility, what would you expect children to be taking responsibility for by the end of high school? Probe re. being a learner in the classroom, as well as in other domains i.e. the playground, extra curricular activities, responsible for self vs responsible for others vs responsible to the community
- Thinking about children’s contribution to decision-making in the school – what are the main forums where they can “have a say” and contribute to what happens here?
- Are there activities where children have to actively join and opt in? (e.g. pupil council, Fair Trade activities)

- In your experience, are there certain children who are more likely to be the “joiners” or “active citizens”? Who are they? (girls, boys, “natural leaders” etc)
- What about the children who for whatever reason prefer to remain on the periphery and do not wish to take part in activities on offer. Are you aware of any such pupils at the moment?
- How realistic is it to think all children can and should take part?
- What would you say are the schools’ key ways to encourage children to be participating citizens?
- In relation to pupils in S1 and S2 what does the school offer in terms of participation- or responsibility-related opportunities?
- What in your view works best with S1 and S2 pupils? Does this build on what happens in primary?
- What about activities that are offered further up the school (S4, S5, S6)?

#### **Final questions**

- What, in your view, has been the most significant development relating to encouraging participation/responsibility in children in schools in recent years?
- How would you like to see the area of pupils having a say in schools develop in future?

### **PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

#### **Introductory/background questions**

- Could you tell me how long you have been at this school? Where else have you worked in your teaching career? How did you find it compared to other schools?
- What class do you teach at the moment?
- In practice, what are main activities that are promoted widely in this school in relation to pupil responsibility, pupil voice and decision-making?

#### **Pupil responsibility, participation and citizenship**

- In terms of pupil responsibility, what would you expect children to be taking responsibility for by the end of primary school (i.e. P7)? Probe re. being a learner in the classroom, as well as in other domains i.e. the playground, extra curricular activities, responsible for self vs responsible for others vs responsible to the community
- What are the main forums where pupils can “have a say” and contribute to what happens here?
- In your experience, are there certain children who are more likely to be the “joiners” or “active citizens”? Who are they? (girls, boys, “natural leaders” etc)
- What about the children who for whatever reason prefer to remain on the periphery and do not wish to take part in activities on offer. How realistic is it to think all children can and should take part?
- To what extent is this different from what happens at the early stages of primary? Are there responsibilities that younger pupils are solely responsible for?
- To what extent does what happens in P7 build on what happens in the early years?

- How does this match with what happens at secondary? Probe re continuity across sectors

#### **Responsibility, participation and transitions**

- In terms of preparation for the move up to secondary school, what kind of things are they doing in primary 7 to prepare?
- From your point of view, what kinds of attributes/competencies do pupils take with them when they leave xxxx primary? {Prompt: Is there one particular attribute that stands out for you?}
- Do you know anything about your pupils' early experiences when they move to xxx High school? Probe how this is known. Prompt: do you know anything about if or how their responsibility and their abilities as citizens and decision-makers are recognized when they are in secondary school?
- Is there someone with special responsibility for transition? If so, what are their roles?

#### **Final questions**

- What, in your view, has been the most significant development relating to encouraging participation/responsibility in children in schools in recent years?
- How would you like to see the area of pupils having a say in schools develop in future?

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